BI Platforms User Survey, 2010: Customers Rate Their BI Platform Vendors

Gartner RAS Core Research Note G00174198, Rita L. Sallam, 5 February 2010 R3334 07092010

Gartner recently surveyed business intelligence (BI) leaders to learn their experiences with BI platforms from 20 vendors. The results will provide insights for those selecting BI vendors and for customers wanting to benchmark suppliers.

Key Findings

- Enterprises with a standard BI platform also employ complementary products for advanced visualization, with interactive user interfaces and in-memory architectures.

- Thus, while the IT organization often focuses on software stacks, business units buy BI platforms on their own, especially when the standard BI platform does not meet users' needs.

- On average, pure-play vendors provide a better overall customer experience than megavendors, but two megavendors — Oracle and Microsoft — scored above average in many categories, including customer experience.

- Customers with a positive experience of a BI platform also viewed their vendor's future positively. In general, customers viewed the megavendors' future more positively than their experience with the product. But this bias has diminished from last year's survey.

Recommendations

- Use these survey results to compare your vendor experiences with those of your peers. Use these results when formulating your vendor negotiation strategies and engagement plans.

- Don't automatically assume that buying a BI platform from your megavendor is the best or only choice. Also evaluate pure-play BI suppliers, and pick the vendor that best suits your needs for functionality, integration and total cost of ownership.

- If you have not yet moved to the latest version of your BI platform, don't assume that upgrades will be simple. Research the total cost and effort required to migrate.

Gartner®

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Gartner's survey of BI leaders found wide variations in their satisfaction with BI platform vendors. Some megavendors scored better than average, some less. The large pure-play vendors tended to do best, though a few small pure-plays also excelled. Enterprises that standardize on a BI platform supplement it with technology from small pure-plays just as often as small pure-plays are used by enterprises that don't standardize on a BI platform. Clients should not automatically buy their BI platform from a megavendor. Rather, they should consider their own particular needs and how well vendors satisfy their peers in key areas of buying and implementing a BI platform.

ANALYSIS

Since at least 2008, enterprises have tried to standardize their BI platform and applications to reduce the number of vendors they must manage, save money and improve the sharing of information. In a recent survey of 897 BI leaders from enterprises around the world, we found that 53% of enterprises now standardize, generally on the BI offerings of the megavendors IBM, Microsoft, Oracle and SAP, and of the large pure-play vendors, which have the most complete set of technologies (see Note 1).

BI leaders' satisfaction varies between megavendors, and between megavendors and pure-play vendors. Moreover, enterprises that standardize continue to buy technologies from other vendors as business users seek ease of use and deployment.

BI leaders that need to deploy new BI technology, upgrade existing systems or standardize on one vendor should consider the experiences of their peers before making any purchase decisions.

Overview of Customer Experiences With BI Vendors: Gartner gathered information on three aspects of the customer experience: software quality, support, and sales experience.

Respondents sent a mixed message about their satisfaction with their BI platform vendors (see Figure 1 and Notes 2 and 3). Most vendors received good scores for their sales process, with all but a few vendors scoring 8 out of 10. But vendors scored much lower for support and software quality, with the average rating of less than 6 out of 10. The latter result suggests a high degree of dissatisfaction among BI users. Emerging pure-play vendors (including QlikTech, Tableau, Tibco and LogiXML) and the large pure-plays MicroStrategy and Information Builders scored above average on both dimensions. Megavendors Oracle and Microsoft performed better than average, but IBM (Cognos) and SAP fell below the mean.

Recommendation: Include the quality of technical support services in your vendor evaluations, and take them into account when you negotiate maintenance terms.

Satisfaction With Vendors Versus Improvement in Future Outlook: The survey indicates that the entrance of megavendors into the BI market will not cause the pure-play vendors to disappear as some have feared. BI leaders remain optimistic about the future of the vendors that they use as a standard, and even of some small pure-play vendors.

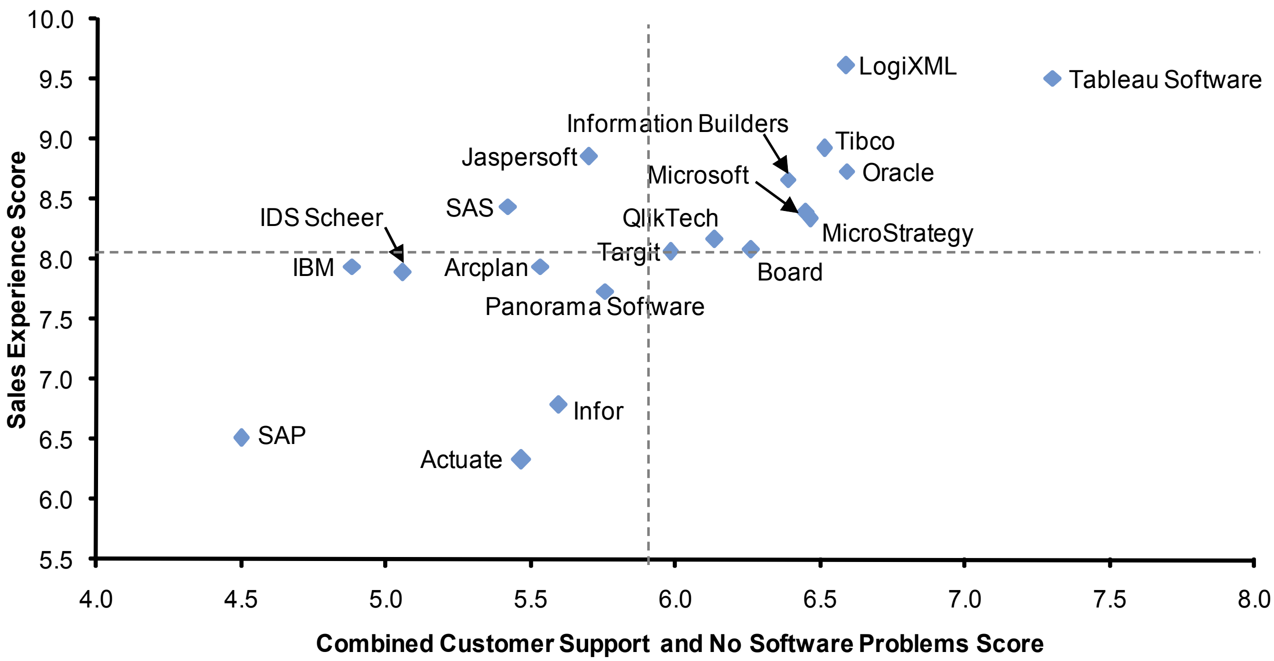
Figure 2 shows respondents' overall experience with their vendor against their assessment of whether their vendor's future prospects have improved since 2008. The horizontal axis (overall BI platform success score) represents composite (aggregate) ratings for product capabilities, support, sales experience, product quality and performance, with equal weightings for each — the higher the composite score, the more positive the overall experience with the vendor. The vertical axis records responses to our question about

Note 1
Survey Details

In November 2009, as part of its research for the Magic Quadrant on BI platforms, Gartner conducted an English-language Web survey of 897 BI professionals, of which 754 represented vendor references and 143 (16%) were non-references from Gartner's BI Summits and client inquiries. Gartner believes the inclusion of non-reference customers in the survey more closely mirrors the views of the general population using these products. The survey lasted about 15 minutes and covered respondents' use of their BI platform vendor. There was an average of 43 responses per vendor. Megavendors have the largest customer bases, so they also had the largest percentage of non-references. Pure-play vendors, which have fewer customers, had a lower percentage of non-references. Non-reference customers tended to provide lower scores than reference customers, but the non-references did not affect the relative ranking of vendors in the survey. This report includes only vendors with 10 or more responses. Respondents' companies had 5,010 employees on average and came from these regions:

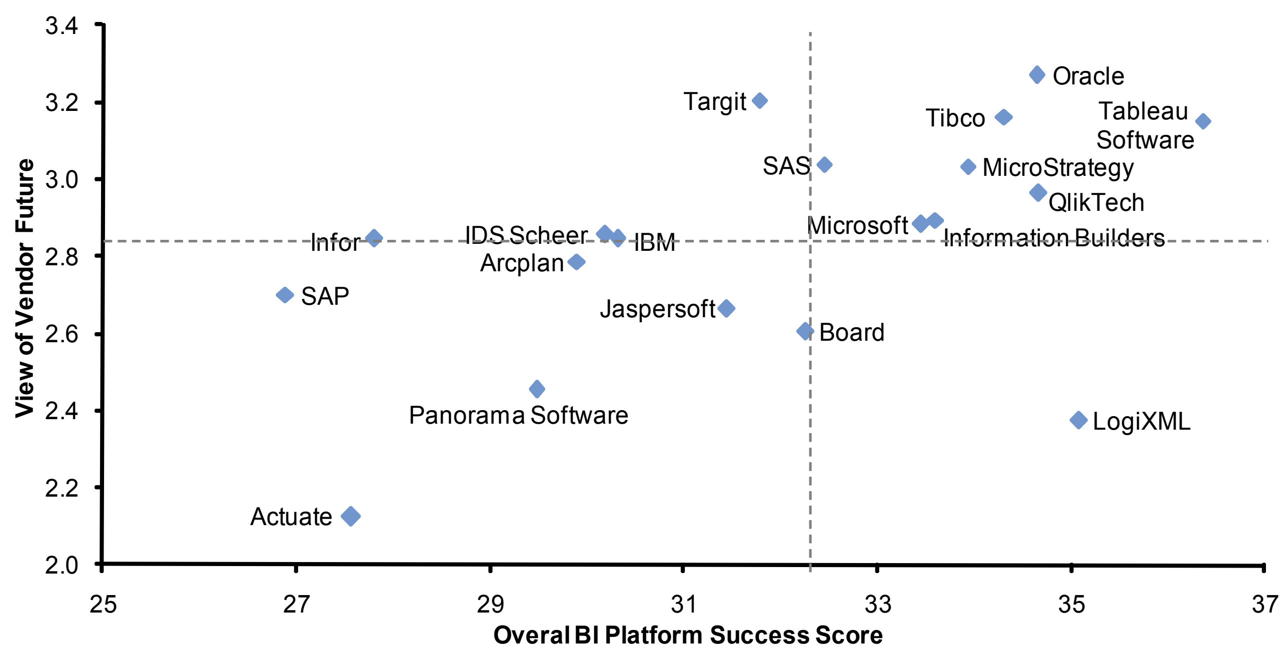
- North America (60% of respondents)
- Western Europe (28%)
- Rest of the world (12%)

Figure 1. Overall Customer Experience



N = 897
Source: Gartner (February 2010)

Figure 2. Satisfaction With Vendors Versus Change in Future Outlook



N = 897
Source: Gartner (February 2010)

Note 2

Customer Experience Score Calculation

We computed the combined customer support and "no software problems" score as follows: vendor support is scored on a scale of one to seven (1 to 2 = poor; 3 to 5 = average; 6 to 7 = outstanding). We converted this score into a percentage (the vendor's score divided by 7). We averaged this percentage and the percentage of respondents reporting no software problems, and normalized the result to a scale of 10 to derive the composite score.

Note 3

Note on the Graphics

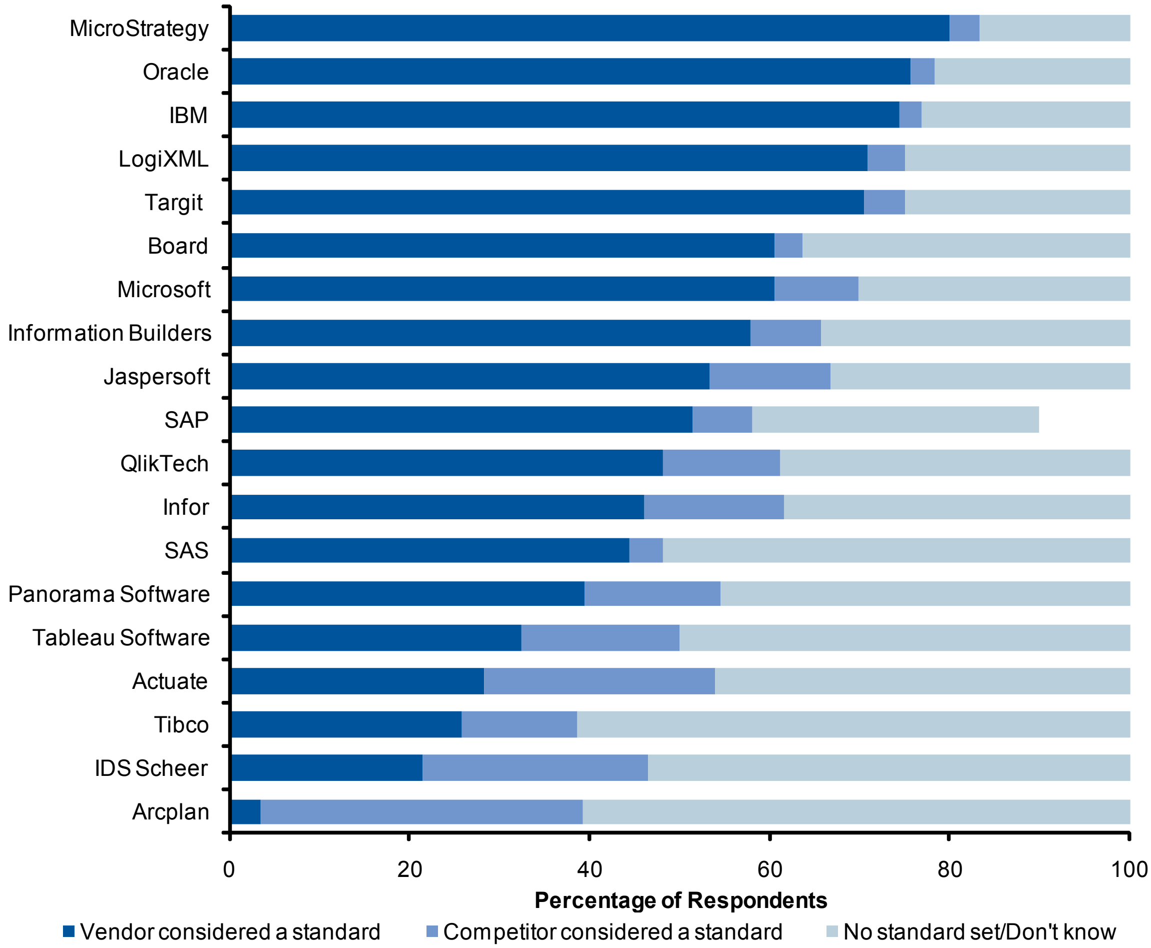
The graphics in this report include only vendors with at least 10 survey responses. They represent customers' perceptions, not Gartner's opinion. Thus, the graphics may feature vendors that, in Gartner's opinion, do not deliver the functions described.

whether respondents were more concerned about the vendor in 2009, more positive, or unchanged in their view (1 = more concerned about the vendor's future; 4 = more positive about the vendor's future).

In general, judgments about the vendor's future correspond to respondents' satisfaction with their vendor. Many pure-play vendors scored above the average for both metrics, as did Oracle and Microsoft. However, even though IBM and SAP scored below average for overall BI platform success, they scored average for their customers' view of their future. This paradox suggests that customers still have high confidence in IBM and SAP's future, although it is less pronounced than in last year's survey, Newcomer LogiXML received some of the highest overall BI platform success ratings, yet customers worry about the future of this small startup.

BI Standardization: An acquisition spree has shifted the center of gravity in the BI market toward the megavendors, and Gartner predicts that this trend toward software stacks will continue. Figure 3 shows the percentage of customers that have chosen their vendor as the enterprise standard. The four megavendors feature among the vendors used by enterprises standardizing their

Figure 3. Percentage of Vendor Customers That Consider Its BI Platform Their Enterprise BI Standard



N = 897
Source: Gartner (February 2010)

BI, but many large pure-play vendors, such as MicroStrategy and Information Builders, also attract customers that are standardizing.

Recommendation: Don't automatically buy a BI platform from your major software supplier. Also evaluate independent BI suppliers, and pick the vendor that best suits your needs for functions, integration and cost.

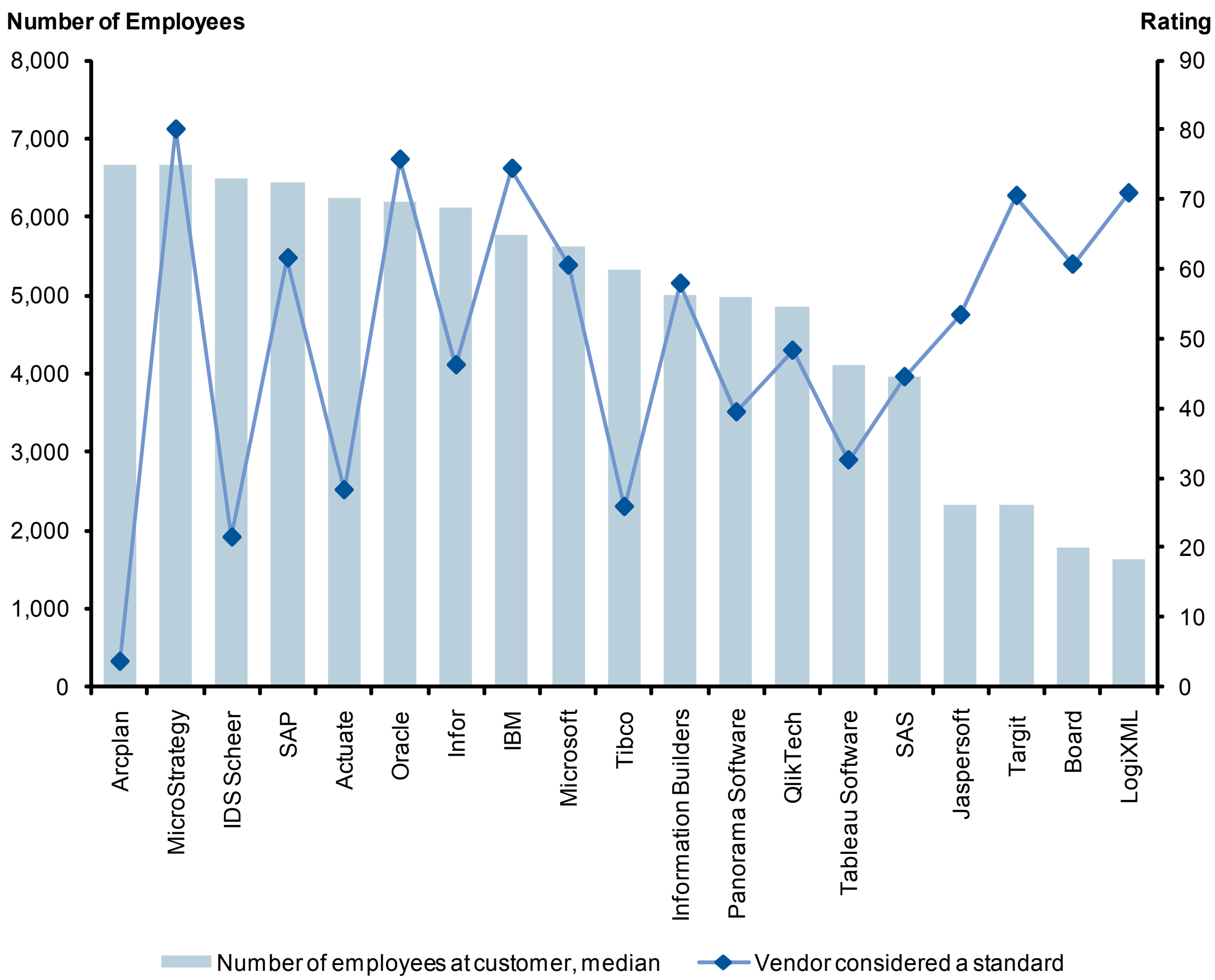
Small vendors provide the BI platform standard for some enterprises, but these enterprises likewise tend to be small. Figure 4 shows that most customers of Board, LogiXML and Targit have made them an enterprise standard, but these customers are less than half the size of the average company in the survey. Enterprises deploy SAS and many of the small pure-plays, including QlikTech, Tableau and Tibco, alongside an enterprise standard to fill needs not met by the standard vendors.

Customers' Satisfaction With Specific Aspects of Vendors' Performance

Decisions about buying, upgrading or standardizing may hinge on the vendor's performance in specific areas, depending on the nature of an enterprise's project. The survey asked BI leaders to rate their vendors in a number of areas.

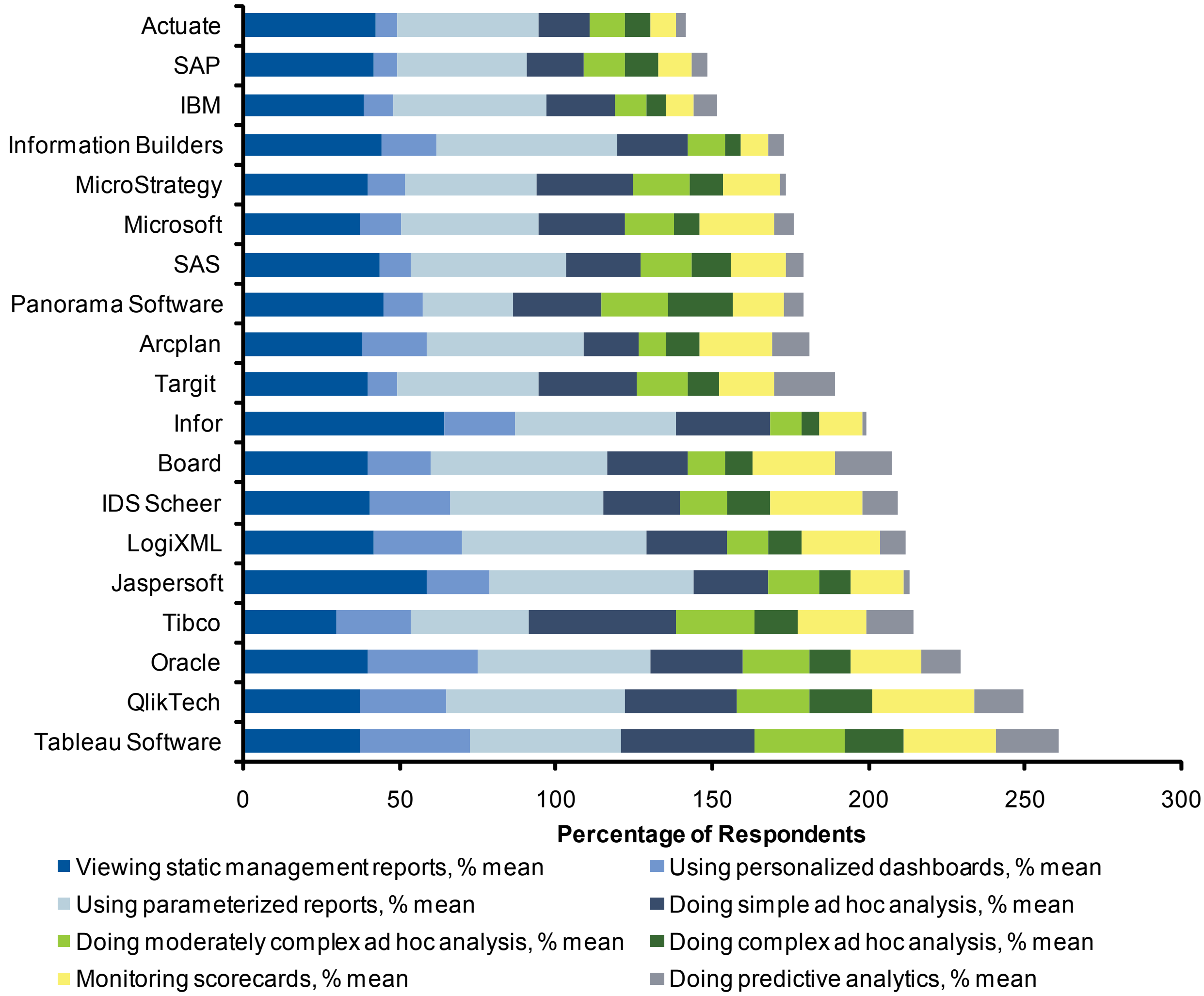
BI Platform Usage: IT organizations struggle to get workers to use the BI systems they have implemented. The survey found significant differences between BI vendors in how much their products are used for differing BI activities (see Figure 5). The survey asked about reporting, ad hoc analysis, dashboards, scorecards and predictive analytics. The bars in Figure 5 show the percentage of customers using each function and the total of all those percentages for each vendor (which therefore exceeds 100%).

Figure 4. BI Standardization Versus Customer Size



N = 897
Source: Gartner (February 2010)

Figure 5. Number of Customers Using Vendors for BI Activities

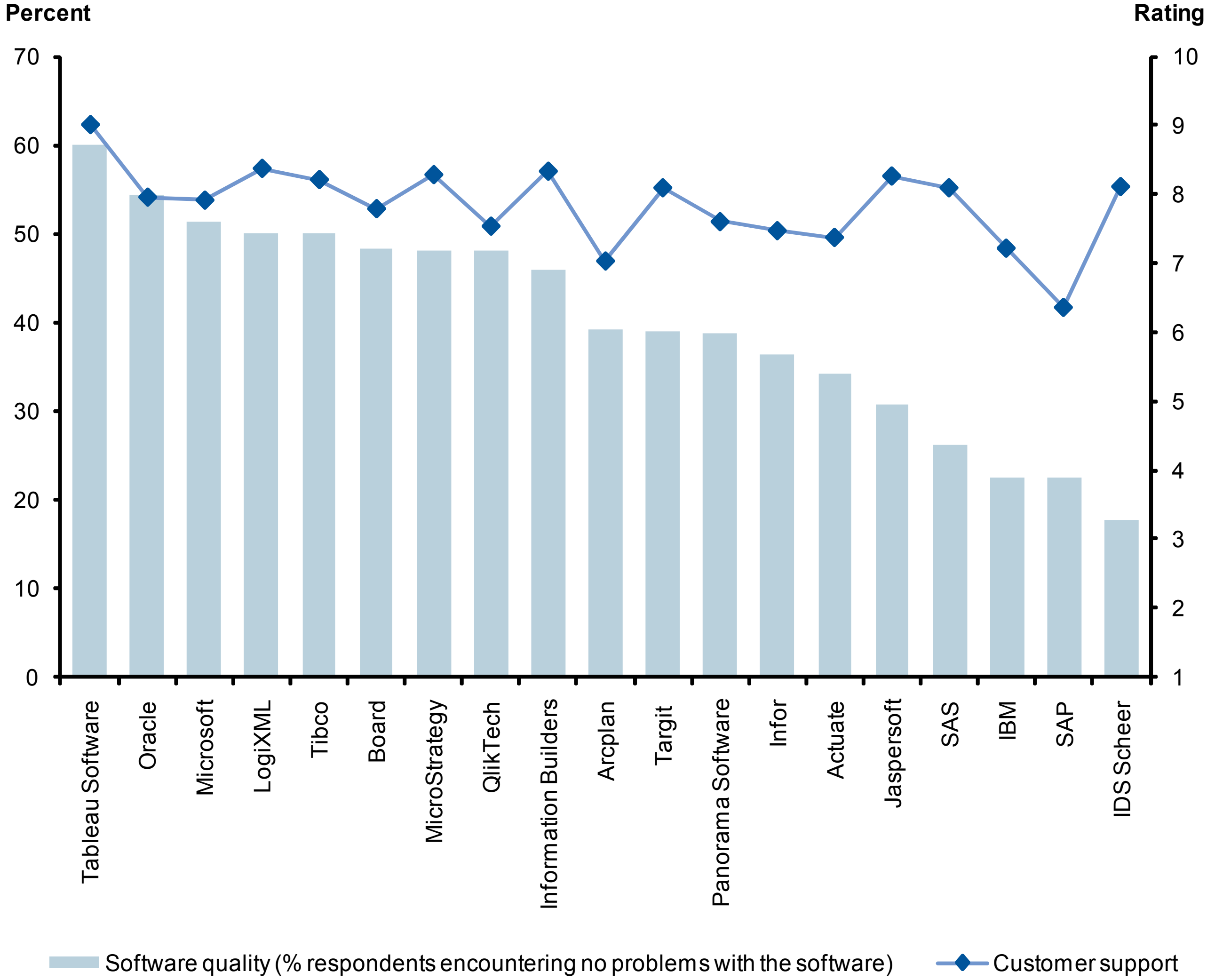


N = 799
Source: Gartner (February 2010)

Tableau and QlikTech customers reported using these platforms most broadly, while Actuate users reported the narrowest usage. Customers used Tableau and Tibco the most for exploratory, ad hoc analysis — a use case of growing importance. Megavendors SAP and IBM were used on average more narrowly than most other BI platforms.

Support and Software Quality: Customers of pure-play vendors report better customer support and higher-quality software on average than customers of the large vendors (see Figure 6). The range of responses varies widely. 60% of Tableau customers reported no problems with the software, while only 30% or less reported no problems with BI products from IDS Scheer, IBM, SAP and SAS. Megavendors Microsoft and Oracle earned

Figure 6. Rating of BI Vendors on Support and Software Quality

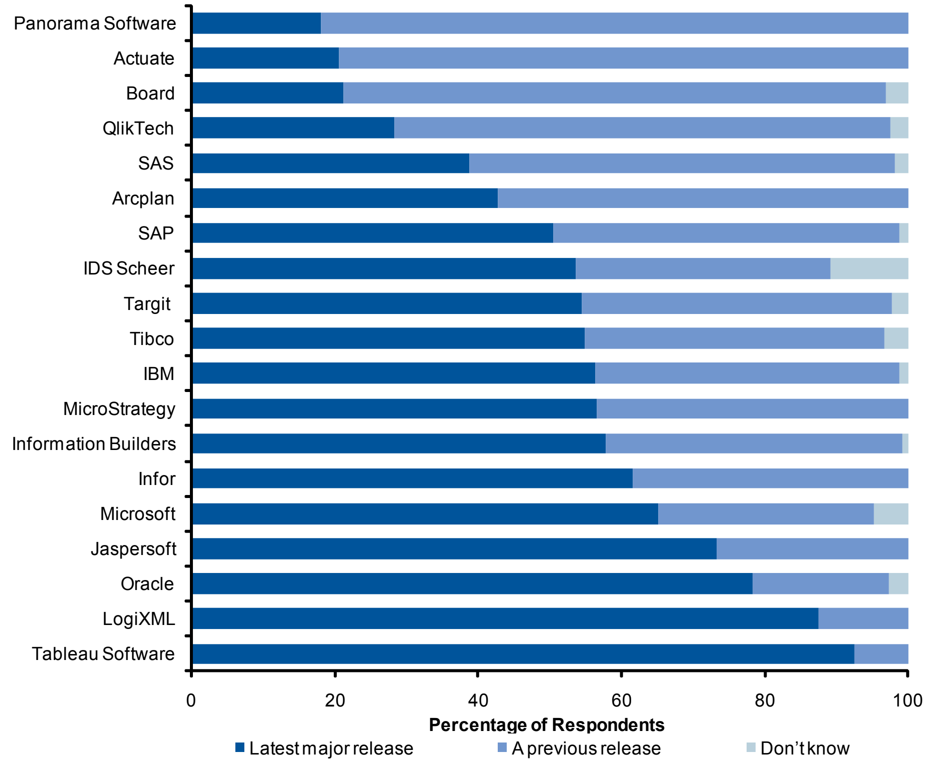


Customer support was scored on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 to 2 = poor, 3 to 5 = average, 6 to 7 = outstanding). This score was normalized to a scale of 1 to 10.
N = 897
Source: Gartner (February 2010)

above-average scores for both support and software quality. MicroStrategy and Information Builders scored particularly well on both measures, a result of well-integrated platforms that the vendors developed organically and strong support organizations that have not been disrupted by acquisitions. Jaspersoft, an open-source vendor that generates its core revenue from support, scored higher in this category than any megavendor.

BI Migration Experience: More than half the respondents had experienced at least one migration or product upgrade (see Figure 7). The survey found that 51.5% of respondents said their enterprise runs the latest version of their vendor's BI platform, with only 9.3% of respondents having never run a previous version. That is, more than half the respondents have experienced at least one migration or product upgrade, but the numbers vary widely

Figure 7. BI Platform Version Deployed



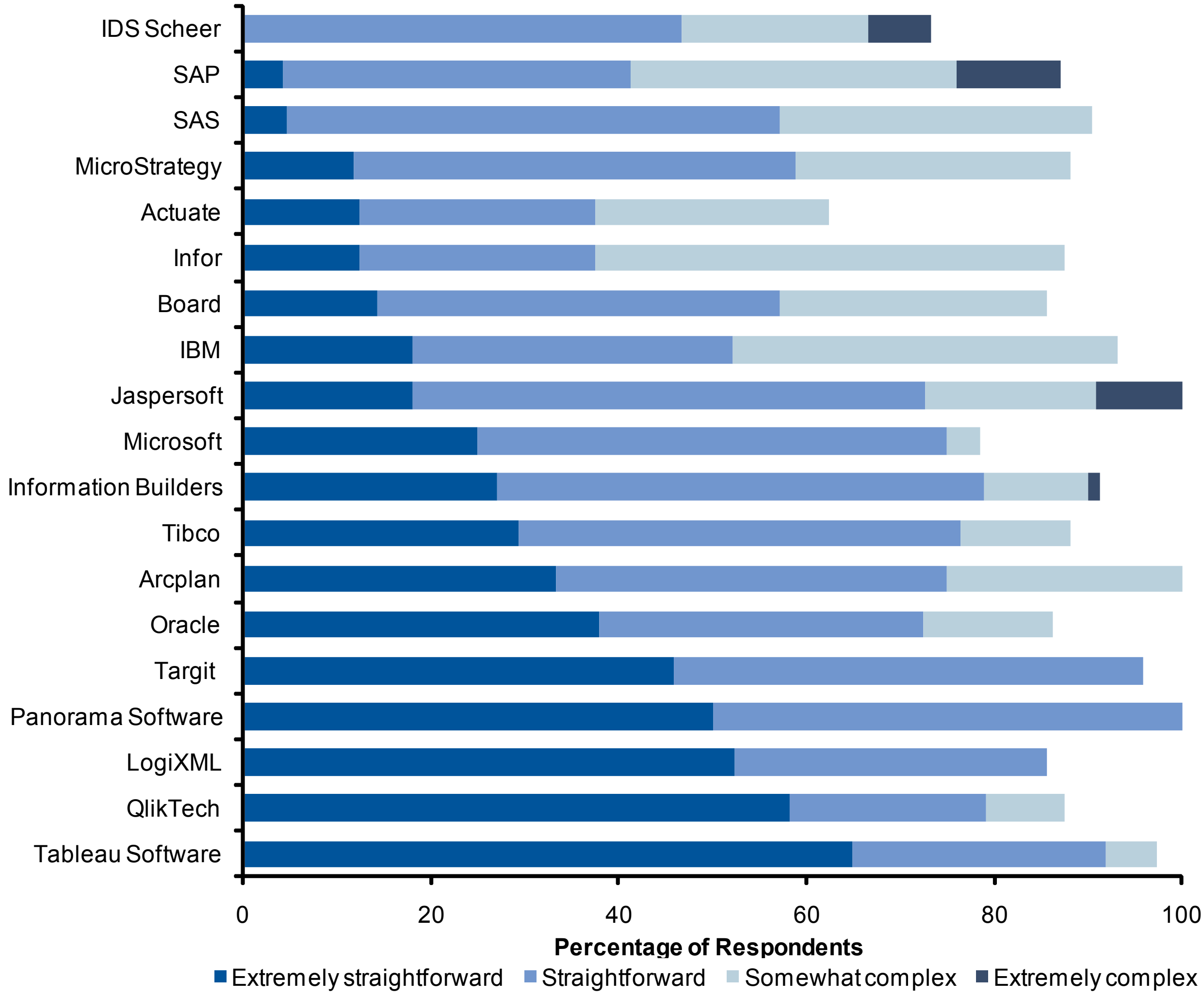
N = 897

Source: Gartner (February 2010)

between vendors. Over 90% of Tableau customers run the latest version of the product, while only about 20% of Panorama, Actuate and Board customers do. Only 51% of SAP customers run the latest release — less than customers of the other megavendors (Microsoft, IBM and Oracle), each of which had 55% or more of their customers running the latest release.

Overall, 69% of survey respondents rated their migration experience as extremely straightforward or straightforward (see Figure 8). Over 40% of IBM and SAP customers on average reported complex or extremely complex migrations — over one and a half times the average for the large independent vendors (SAS, MicroStrategy and Information Builders).

Figure 8. Migration Experience of BI Customers

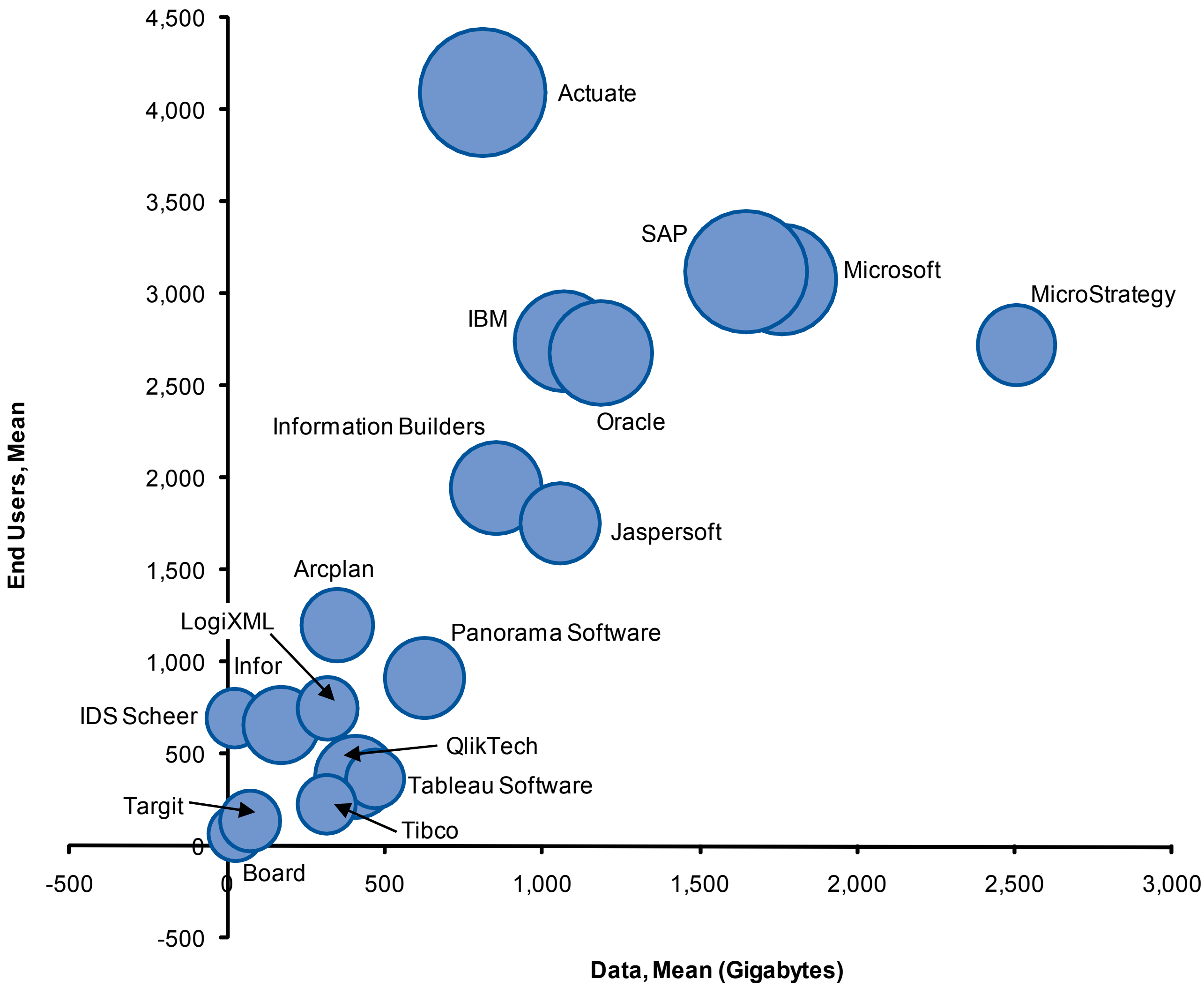


N= 462
Source: Gartner (February 2010)

Recommendation: If you have not yet moved to the latest version of your BI platform, do not assume that upgrades will be simple. Research the cost and effort required to migrate.

Efficiency: The survey asked about the number of users on the system, the amount of data it handled and the number of administrators used to manage the system (see Figure 9). The blue circles represent the number of administrators, while the horizontal and vertical axes represent the amount of data and number of users, respectively (see Note 4 for the actual number of administrators represented by the blue circles). Actuate had the largest number of users for the average deployment, Board the fewest. MicroStrategy managed the largest data sets, IDS Scheer, and Board the smallest. On average, megavendors supported 11 times the users and five times the data volumes with less than three times the number of administrators, compared with the average of pure-play vendors QlikTech, Tibco, Tableau and Board. However, the megavendors were less efficient than the large pure-plays

Figure 9. Efficiency of BI Platforms Measured by Users, Data and Administrators



N = 799
Source: Gartner (February 2010)

(SAS, MicroStrategy and Information Builders); the megavendors supported on average 1.5 times the number of users and 0.94 times the data, with 1.7 times the administrators.

Figure 10 normalizes the number of administrators reported to a per 1,000 end user and per 1,000GB scale. Megavendors require fewer administrators on average per 1,000 users or 1,000GB. MicroStrategy customers report the lowest numbers both per 1,000 users and per 1,000GB, an efficiency that contributes to the vendor’s low total cost of ownership.

Note 4

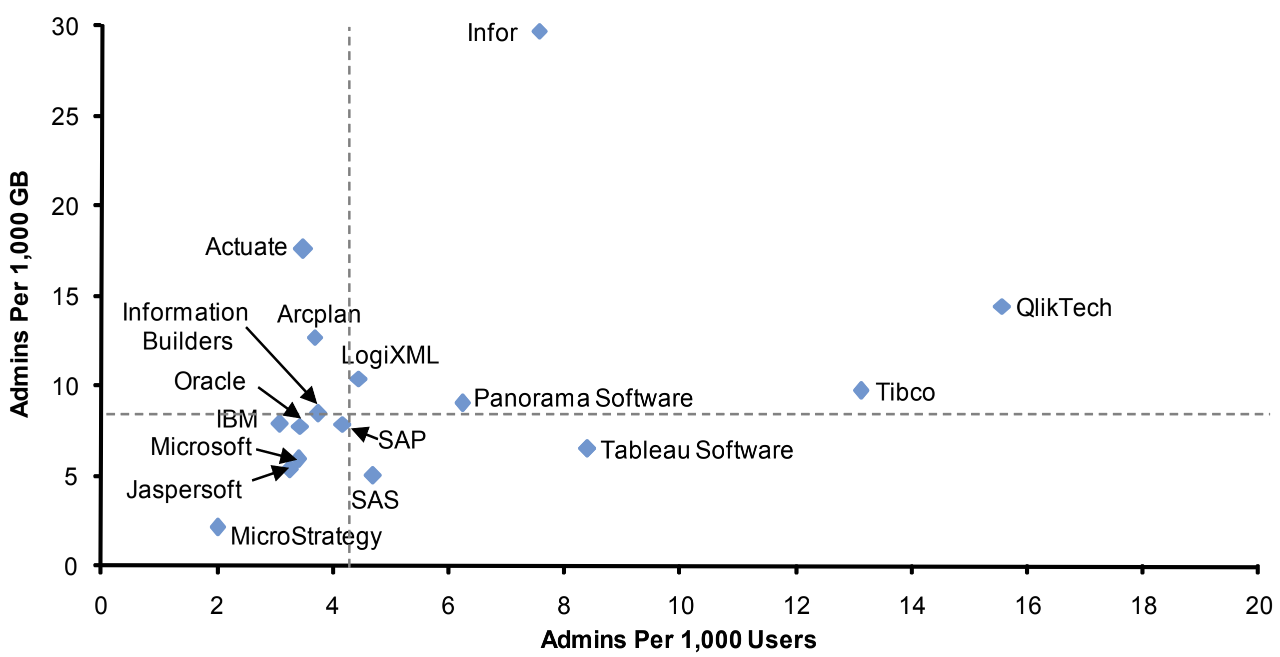
Mean Number of Administrators per Vendor in Figure 9

Table 1. Mean Number of Administrators per Vendor in Figure 9

Vendor	Mean Administrators Based on Mid-Point Range
Actuate	14.31
SAP	12.94
Microsoft	10.49
Oracle	9.19
IBM	8.46
Information Builders	7.27
SAS	5.96
QlikTech	5.91
Jaspersoft	5.69
Panorama Software	5.69
MicroStrategy	5.46
Infor	5.0
Arcplan	4.31
LogiXML	3.33
Tableau	3.06
Tibco	3.05
Targit	3.02
IDS Scheer	2.94
Board	2.58

Source: Gartner (February 2010)

Figure 10. Efficiency of BI Platforms Measured by Administrators per 1,000 End Users and per 1,000 Gigabytes



N = 799
Source: Gartner (February 2010)